

Liberty States Fiction Writers

New York ~ New Jersey ~ Pennsylvania



Volume 1 Issue 3

Let Freedom Ring!

March 2009

Anne Walradt, Newsletter Editor

If anyone would like to volunteer to assist with the newsletter, please contact Anne at awalradt@aol.com

If you cannot read this newsletter, please try these alternatives:

LINK TO WEB VERSION:

(requires login to Members Only area of Liberty States Fiction Writers Website)

LINK TO PDF VERSION in Files Section:

<http://groups.yahoo.com/group/LSFWritersAnnouncements/files/>

(requires login to Liberty Announcements Yahoogroups)

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Member News – See what's happening with our Members

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President's Column:



Gail Freeman, President

My intent is to use this column to keep you up to date on what is happening at Liberty States Fiction Writers. Much of the work of the Board is handled between meetings because, as I've stated before, we believe the meetings should be about the writing and not the day to day operations of the group. So, let me tell you what we've been up to. [Read more . . .](#)

Next Month's Meeting:

April 25 Meeting: The next meeting of the Liberty States Fiction Writers is on **April 25** at the Edison Public Library on Stelton Road. The May meeting is on **May 9** at the Edison Public Library on Stelton Road.

In celebration of Mayke It Happen May, there will be a **Mayke It Happen party!**

When: Saturday, May 2, 2009, 11:00 a.m. until ?

Where: The home of Michele Richter (indoors and outdoors)

Mayke It Happen coordinator Chris Redding and other published authors will be there to help you reach your goals. Learn tips and techniques to get that first draft on the page and quick. Get help breaking your roadblocks. Receive encouragement from fellow writers to Mayke It Happen with your writing.

Food, drink, music and laughs too! All Liberty States members are welcome!

The April workshop will be:

Show up Naked - Keys to Writing the Male POV

by Chris Redding

Author Chris Redding has come to the conclusion that to woo a woman you have to do a long grocery list of things, including present her with flowers and chocolates. For men, all you have to do is show up naked and bring food. With this in mind, Chris has developed a workshop on writing from the male point of view. Come to the LSF Writers April meeting and learn everything about Manspeak and more.

About Chris Redding: Chris Redding lives in New Jersey with her husband, two sons, and a dog. Since childhood Chris has managed to surround herself with men. As the only girl who could throw as well as the boys, they often rounded her up for pick up games of stickball. In college she delivered pizza, a male-dominated profession. Then she went on to become an EMT and work for a local hospital in the Emergency Medical Services Department. Both of these jobs mean she is constantly in contact with her research subjects: men. Chris is a member of LSF, WRW and RWA. Her first book, *THE DRINKING GAME*, came out in 2004. Her second book, *CORPSE WHISPERER*, was a 2007 release. For more information on Chris, please visit the [Chris Redding Blogspot](#).



Our Roundtable Sessions will be on **Writing Blurbs** and **Pitches and Critiques**. For the Pitches and Critique Roundtable Session, please bring 10 (ten) copies of 5 (five) Pages from the work you wish to discuss as well as any pitch you would like to try out. If you are a published author and would like to assist with the pitches and critique sessions, please contact Lois Winston, our Program Chair.

Due to the short nature of the time between the April and May meetings, we would like to provide you the following information about the May meeting.

The May workshop will be:

Breaking into Print - and Hitting the Bestseller Lists

By Eloisa James

In this workshop, bestselling author Eloisa James will discuss the nuts and bolts of getting published: how to compose a manuscript, find an agent, sign with a publisher, understand a contract, negotiate your terms. But she'll also discuss the more arcane side of publishing fiction: How do you write a bestseller? After that terrific first book, how do you build and sustain a career as a New York Times bestseller?



About Eloisa James: New York Times bestselling author Eloisa James's historical regencies have been published to great acclaim; People Magazine raved that "romance writing does not get much better than this." Her fifteen novels have repeatedly received starred reviews from Publishers' Weekly, and regularly appear on the best-seller lists, reaching #10 on the New York Times with *When the Duke Returns* in December, 2008. Eloisa is also a professor of English literature, teaching Shakespeare at Fordham University. She's the mother of two children and, in a particularly delicious irony for a romance writer, is married to a genuine Italian knight. For more information on Eloisa, please visit

her website at www.eloisajames.com.

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Articles in this Issue:

10 11 Steps to Building a character (It should be so easy.)

by Shelley Freydont

[Read more . . .](#)

Homonyms

by Pattie Giordani

[Read more . . .](#)

Back to the Beginning

by Alicia Rasley

[Read more . . .](#)

Virginia's Guide to Guy-Speak

By Virginia Kantra

[Read more . . .](#)

The Plot Thickens Part 1

by Jenna Kernan

[Read more . . .](#)

The Hero's Journey Recap

by Caridad Pineiro

[Read more . . .](#)

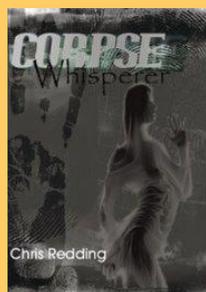
Media Interviewing Tips for Writers

by Whitney McKnight

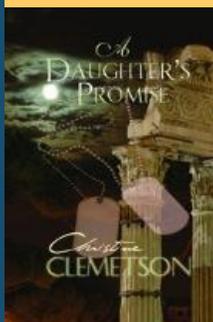
[Read more . . .](#)

Author Spotlight:

April's Author Spotlight is on Chris Redding and Christine Clemetson.



Chris Redding has been writing since she was ten and seriously for about ten years. She lives in New Jersey with her husband, two kids and a dog. She graduated from Penn State. When not writing she works for her local hospital. Chris will be signing copies of CORPSE WHISPERER. For more information on Chris, please visit the [Chris Redding Blogspot](#).



At a young age, **Christine Clemetson** discovered she had her own story to tell. Not just one, but many! While earning her degree in Literature/Language and growing her career as a technical writer, Christine kept writing and learning the craft of putting together a good story. Christine will be signing her debut book, A DAUGHTER'S PROMISE, which was released by the Wild Rose Press in January 2009. For more information on Christine, please visit www.christineclemetson.com.

Due to the short nature of the time between the April and May meetings, we would like to provide you the following information about the May Author Spotlight.

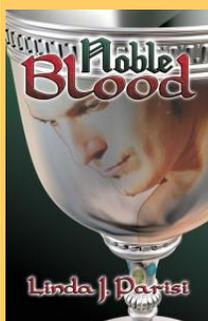
May's Author Spotlight is on Penelope Marzec, Linda Parisi and Pearl Wolf.



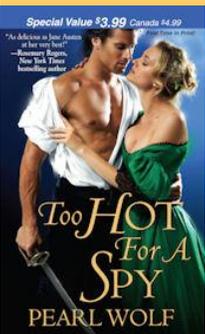
**Irons in the Fire by Penelope Marzec
January 2009 - Crescent Moon Press (Re-issue)**

Catherine despises her ability to foresee the future because she cannot change the course of events. However, after her uncle is murdered, she finds he has left her a mysterious book of ancient Celtic spells. She decides to try one odd rhyme to save the man she loves. She hopes to bind his soul to hers for eternity with the old incantation, but when she discovers a burglary ring her life is in danger, too, and only the power of love can save her.

**Noble Blood by Linda J. Parisi
April 2009 - The Wild Rose Press - Black Rose
Print ISBN: 1-60154-488-X
Print ISBN 13: 9781601544889**



The Nobility: A race created by the effects of a meteorite. A dying race. A race without a True Noble birth in over a decade. The Water of Change: Water changed by the meteorite, able to turn a human into a Noble, an ability certain to cause death. Forbidden to be used by the Nobility's most sacred law. A Law Broken: Tamara Duncan has just been made into a True Noble and left with no memory of her former self. Nicholai Valentin accuses her of trying to kill his brother and destroy his House by using the Water. Is she part of a plot, or simply a pawn in something bigger than either of them can imagine? A Quest for Truth: Together, Nicholai and Tamara journey a dangerous path to seek the truth. Along the way they will be tested, and as they seek the truth, they find strength in each other; a strength that will lead to love and more than they ever bargained for.



**Too Hot for a Spy by Pearl Wolf
March 2009 - Kensington
ISBN-10: 1420104802
ISBN-13: 978-1420104806**

Lady Olivia Fairchild has always lived a life of luxury and ease, but she longs for the kind of intrigue that can't be found on a ballroom dance floor. Then Olivia learns she's been accepted as the first female student in England's prestigious spy

school. But spy–training is far more grueling than Olivia ever imagined—and her dashing spymaster seems bent on banishing her from the school in record time... Sebastian Brooks believes women have no place within the dangerous world of espionage—and he’s determined to oust Olivia by whatever means necessary. But even as Sebastian mercilessly taunts her, he finds the sight of Olivia’s shapely body gallivanting on horseback is driving him wild. Olivia, too, can feel her longing for Sebastian heating up. Surrendering to her desire could be the most reckless move of her life—but resisting it may be impossible...

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Meeting Review:

Review of Mar. 14th meeting:

CREATING A COMPELLING PLOT USING THE HERO’S JOURNEY presented by Caridad Pineiro; Review by Caridad Pineiro

The March 14th meeting of the Liberty States Fiction Writers featured USA TODAY and NY Times bestseller Caridad Pineiro who presented a program entitled Creating a Compelling Plot Using the Hero’s Journey. For a review of the workshop, please see the [Articles Section](#).

Roundtable Sessions Review:

For those of you who couldn't make the March meeting and asked about a recap of the Video Trailer roundtable, Rayna and Caridad recommended the following programs for easy creation of video trailers:

Photo Story 3 – free download available from Microsoft - [click here](#)

Movie Maker – free download available from Microsoft – [click here](#)

IMOVIE – standard on Macintosh computers

Coffee Cup Flash Firestarter – Cost \$49 from <https://www.coffeecup.com/store/>

Rayna and Caridad explained the basics involved, namely:

1. Create a storyboard. Videos require short snippets that grab a reader’s attention, like the back of a jacket blurb.
2. Select royalty free photos from sites such as istockphoto.com or fotolia.com
3. Royalty free music is also available at some sites. Rayna and Caridad recommended Incompetech as a good source of such music.
4. Upload your video to as many sites as possible, such as:
 - a. Youtube
 - b. Myspace
 - c. Facebook
 - d. MSN Video
 - e. Yahoo Videos
 - f. Vimeo

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Member News:

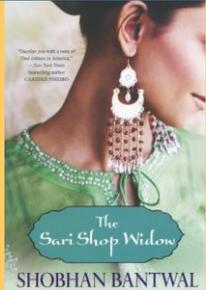
Dianne Gerber, writing as Autumn Jordon, is proud to announce that first novel, a romantic suspense, HIS WITNESS (working title) and recently sold to The Wild Rose Press, is a finalist in the Romance Writers of America Golden Heart contest. Please visit her at www.autumnjordon.com where you can sign up for her quarterly newsletter.



Caridad Pineiro is pleased to announce that **FURY CALLS** was a Fresh Fiction Fresh Pick! and was featured on every page of the Fresh Fiction website on March 20th. In addition, **FURY CALLS** has been receiving rave reviews, such as:

Vampire Romance Books: "Ms. Pineiro has done an amazing job of blending suspense with the vampire genre. Her tale keeps you reading not only because of the chemistry between Meghan and Blake, but also to find out how they are going to neutralize the threat that surrounds them."

The Book Pedler: "In *Fury Calls*, Piniero has given us a story of true, bittersweet emotion. She has given us a novel where the characters on the page are so alive, they seem to live and breathe off of the pages."



Shobhan Bantwal has just received the cover for her September release, *The Sari Shop Widow* from Kensington Publishing.

Amy Heffernan has joined the world of blogging. Visit her first blog post!
<http://alheffernan.blogspot.com/>

Chris Redding has had her first Authors Day on her blog. The author was Harry Ramble (www.harryramble.com) author of *Sex Offender Lives Here*. Chris is looking for authors who are interested in being a guest blogger. Please contact Chris privately if you are interested.



Joanne Timrum, writing as **Joanna Aislinn**, has just received the cover for her Wild Rose Press Release, *No Matter Why*.

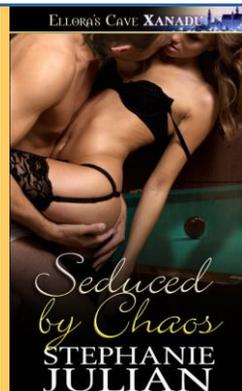


Coffee Cup Romance reviewed **Elaine Chanton's** *Pandora's Justice*, gave it 5 coffee cups and noted "Wow! What a great book. Action, romance, cute kids, all that is missing is the puppy. The characters are well honed and pull you into their story to ride along for one heck of an adventure. The storyline just races along, making you try to turn the pages faster. I totally enjoyed this story and all it had to offer and I am sure many other readers as well. Wonderfully done, Ms. Chanton."

Caridad Pineiro is rounding up items for a Liberty States Fiction Writers donation to the annual Brenda Novak Diabetes Auction. This is a great opportunity to not only donate to a worthy cause, but get your name out there for the thousands of people who bid on items in the auction. The deadline to send in your information is April 15th so please e-mail Caridad with the items you wish to donate. You can reach Caridad at cpsromance@att.net.

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Upcoming Member Releases:



Seduced by Chaos by Stephanie Julian

March 2009

Ellora's Cave

Tall, dark and handsome, the guy walks into Lacey's bar like he's expecting to be hit with a hail of bullets. There's something about him that draws her but Lacey has a secret. One that could threaten her freedom, her very life if it's exposed. One night of magical sex and all bets are off as Lacey's secret catches up with her and Teo will risk everything, including himself, to keep her safe. And make her his.



Fury Calls by Caridad Pineiro

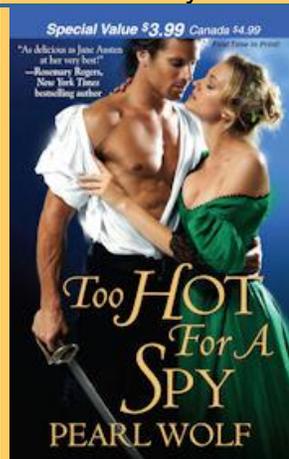
March 2009

Silhouette Nocturne

ISBN 0373618077

Blake Richards knows he messed up years earlier when he sired innocent NYU Coed Meghan Thomas. For years he's been living in the background of the vampire underworld, watching out for Meghan. When danger arrives, he decides that it's time to show everyone, and Meghan, that he's a good man. That he's reliable. Problem is that's a hell of a thing to prove. Years earlier, Meghan Thomas was filled with fury with Blake stole her life and made her one of the undead. Despite that, she can't deny her attraction to the sexy and unpredictable British punk vampire. Plus, he may have just saved her life by taking it since it

helped her discover her new profession and a set of friends on whom she can rely. But when vampires start ending up dead and Blake is blamed, can she put aside her anger to discover the man he really is?



Too Hot for a Spy by Pearl Wolf

March 2009

Kensington

ISBN-10: 1420104802

ISBN-13: 978-1420104806

Lady Olivia Fairchild has always lived a life of luxury and ease, but she longs for the kind of intrigue that can't be found on a ballroom dance floor. Then Olivia learns she's been accepted as the first female student in England's prestigious spy school. But spy-training is far more grueling than Olivia ever imagined—and her dashing spymaster seems bent on banishing her from the school in record time... Sebastian Brooks believes women have no place within the dangerous world of espionage—and he's determined to oust Olivia by whatever means necessary. But even as Sebastian mercilessly taunts her, he finds the sight of Olivia's shapely body gallivanting on horseback is driving him wild. Olivia, too, can feel her longing for Sebastian heating up.

Surrendering to her desire could be the most reckless move of her life—but resisting it may be impossible...

To see additional upcoming Member Releases, [please click here!](#)

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Spotlight on:

Whitney McKnight



Romance novelists? Yeah, right. If you were to have told me years ago when I received my BA from a prominent creative writing program that I would be working with and for romance novelists among other commercial genres, I would have stared at you blankly. I was a writer of literary fiction and poetry, (and still am). We had important things to say! We were taught, either outright or tacitly, that commercial fiction was— dare anyone admit it? Okay, I will—beneath us. And yet, funny how if you don't know how to commercialize your talent, no one will know you have it.

Enter the Liberty States Fiction Writers. You're a savvy bunch!

Networking with and learning from groups like LSFW fills in the gaps that literary writing programs often leave open. How does one find an agent? Which agents should you avoid? Who can you trust to give you good feedback on your work? What are the latest trends? What will you need to be responsible for once a publisher buys your work? These are the kinds of nuts and bolts bits that this group knows are essential, and makes sure its members have opportunities to learn and apply.

After decades of working with writers in practically every category, from fiction to non-fiction, poetry, the media, and marketing, I can say unequivocally that regardless of one's level of talent, a thorough understanding of *Publishing, the Industry* sets apart the successful from the less-than-successful. Who you know, as well as *what* you know counts, regardless of what you publish. And while we're being confessional here, just as not all commercial fiction writers shine, not everyone with an MFA really has much to say. Put another way: the ability to tell a story combined with the ability to attract an audience transcends all.

The services I offer authors include all manner of editorial consulting, but my specialty is marketing, specifically publicity. As part of LSFW, I hope to connect with other writers and publishing professionals I can learn from, and for whom my own experiences might be of value. I have worked in all major media formats, including print, broadcast, and on-line, as well as with the publishing industry as a writer, editor, publicist, and project manager. Currently, I am the editor and primary contributor to my own blog and companion e-zine, [The Word Bird Review](#), which together explore myth and meaning in popular American culture.

Stories with my "touch" on them, either via my voice, byline, media placement, sources, or editorial input have been carried by media outlets such as: *CNBC, The Wall Street Journal, the AP, TheStreet.com, The Toronto Globe & Mail, The Financial Times, USA Today Weekend, The Newark Star-Ledger, The Christian Science Monitor, Marketplace, Gannet Newswire, New Jersey Monthly, USAirways Magazine, The Philadelphia Inquirer, mediabistro.com, 1010WINS*, and many others, including major market network radio and TV affiliates for CBS, ABC, NBC, and Fox. I have also written three book packages for US Media Holdings.

Find me on-line at: www.whitneymcknight.com or at most monthly meetings. I'm easy to spot; I usually have something with feathers on my personage to symbolize the hawk-like power of "true" stories told with mercy and grace. Looking forward to meeting you!

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Road Story:

My Writing Journey
by Linda J. Parisi

Hello. My name is Linda J. Parisi. A very long time ago when I was totally stressed out by Organic Chemistry and Genetics exams, I picked up my very first Harlequin Presents. I fell in love with Rakes and Sheiks; *the Flame and the Flower*, *The Kadin*, and I was hooked. You know, I still have original copies of those books. Why? Because I love Romantic fiction.

During my twenties and thirties I worked as a resident vampire. Yes, in a real Blood Bank as a medical technologist. But it wasn't until I had my son at age thirty-five that I thought about writing a book. I talked incessantly about it. But I was scared. No, make that petrified. In my heart I knew I could write. I even had enough college credits in English for a second major.

Not one word went down on paper.

A very dear friend, Warren Romer, listened to all the words that couldn't reach the page and sent me a paragraph and a challenge. He told me to write another paragraph and send it back to him. Then he would write another paragraph and send it back to me. I was working nights at the time and the house would be dark and lonely when I got home, so I wrote in my upstairs bathroom (yes, on the toilet seat), the only place I could turn on a light and not bother my husband and my son yet not feel so alone. And *Triple E* was born. Three weeks later, Warren didn't send the story back. I couldn't understand why. We had three chapters going. We were having fun. And that was when he told me to spread my wings. I already knew how to fly.

I'll never really be able to thank him.

During the next ten years I wrote six books and started about four more. I became deeply involved in New Jersey Romance Writers. I learned my craft. And I kept getting rejected. Contests, books, you name it. I came very close to quitting several times; if anyone doesn't believe me just as Elaine Charton or Susan Baxter. And I became more involved in my son's life; his school, and his activities. I didn't stop writing. Ever. But the importance of publishing a book took a back seat in my life.

Besides, writing is supposed to be fun not painful. So I started spreading those wings again. I tried writing comedy. I wrote a contemporary that I *almost* sold to Laura Cifelli at NAL. But the importance wasn't on selling the books, it was on writing them.

Then my life, as most lives do, hit a curve in the road. I was diagnosed and treated for Breast Cancer. I was insanely lucky. I was diagnosed very early and went through minimal treatment. But in that moment when you face a piece of your own mortality, you find out what's really important in your life. My son had grown up without my realizing it. My husband didn't need a mother hen. I needed to do something with myself.

I needed to become a published author.

I did. And then the fun started.

In August of 2006, a little over a year after my last treatment, I sold *Noble Blood* to Triskelion Publishing. I continued on and wrote *Noble Heart*, the sequel, on a January 2007 deadline. Although I never received an actual signed contract, they put *Noble Heart* into their publishing schedule. So, I guess I sold both of them. In March 2007, several dear friends advised me to pull out of Trisk and get my rights back. I did. And I'm telling you, that hurt worse than all the surgeries and treatments I'd recently gone through.

But when a door closes, a window usually opens. A new publishing company, The Wild Rose Press, had opened. I sold them *Noble Blood* in October 2007. Then I sent them *Noble Heart*. I kept asking and in April 2008, I received word that they were going to buy the book. At least, that's what I thought. But by August, I still had no contract, and found that TWRP had changed their policies and now wanted to review all manuscripts to make sure they were romances.

I write Romance. HeIIllo!

After going through two editors and the thought that I sucked so bad at writing I didn't even have the talent to write the copy on a soup can label, I submitted a third book to TWRP, *D'Nar*. I'm hoping to hear from them soon that they'll buy it. But the punch-line to the story is—two weeks ago while I was sitting in a hotel room on business, feeling very alone as I had in my bathroom all those years ago—I got an email and a contract for *Noble Heart*.

I'm not telling everyone they have to travel the road I've been on. At one point it didn't matter to me if I got published or not. What was important, what will always be important, is that I never stopped writing. I never wanted to stop writing. I never stopped being a member of a writing organization because I wanted to be a better writer.

Success isn't always about the destination it's about the road you travel. And if anyone had shown me all those years ago that this was what was in store for me, I still wouldn't change a thing. Because achievements that are hard won are the sweetest victories of all. So world, do your worst and bring on the candy. I've got an insatiable appetite and a really big sweet tooth.

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Contests and Online Courses:

Contests:

Deadly Ink Published and Unpublished Contests

Deadline for Nominating Published Works: March 1

Deadline for Unpublished Entries: April 15

For more information, please visit www.deadlyink.com/contests.html.

PARSEC Science Fiction and Fantasy Short Story Contest

Deadline April 15

For more information, please visit www.parsec-sff.org/contest/contest09.html.

NEW! Knight Agency Book in a Nutshell Contest

Deadline April 20

Submit three compelling sentences (150 words max) about your completed, unpublished manuscript to submissions@knightagency.net (mailto:submissions@knightagency.net). Write BOOK IN A NUTSHELL in the subject line or it will not be deemed eligible. One submission per project, please. Twenty of the best submissions will be chosen and requested by various agents who will then give feedback on your work...and it may even lead to possible representation. Hurry, the deadline is April 20, 2009. Winners will be notified by May 1, 2009. For more info, go to <http://tinyurl.com/cnfe9d>. *Courtesy Cynthia Sterling*

Writer's Digest Annual Writing Competition

Deadline May 15

Writer's Digest is now accepting entries in the 78th Annual Writing Competition. Don't miss your chance to win part of the more than \$30,000 in cash and prizes. For more information, please visit www.writersdigest.com/annual.

Third Annual Black Orchid Novella Contest

Deadline Postmarked by May 31

Each entry must be an original unpublished work of fiction that conforms to the tradition of the Nero Wolfe series. For more information, please visit www.nerowolfe.org.

NEW! [The Writer 2009 Short-Story Contest](#)

Deadline: May 31

We're looking for your best short story! Submit your unpublished short story to 2,000 words to *The Writer* to be eligible for the \$1,000 first prize and publication in the magazine! Finalist judge: Shelby Hearon, award-winning author of 15 novels, including *Year of the Dog*, *Ella in Bloom*, *Footprints* and *Life Estates*. Click [here](#) to read the rules and guidelines.

WOW! Women On Writing Flash Fiction Contest

Deadline: MONTHLY

Entry Fee: \$5.00

Prize: Cash: \$200, \$150, \$100, Plus over \$2,000 in Prizes + publication + \$50 gift certificates
WOW! Women On Writing hosts a quarterly flash fiction contest open to English-speaking contestants across the globe. For more information, please visit www.wow-womenonwriting.com.

NEW! Simon & Schuster and Cheerios Cereal is sponsoring its third annual New Author Contest for previously unpublished authors of children's books. Entries are being accepted through July 15, 2009 and the winner will be announced in March 2010. There is no cost to enter. The Grand Prize is \$5000, with two first prizes of \$1000 each. . Submit an original story for children ages 3-8. The contest is open to any United States resident who is age 18 or older who has never received payment for a work of fiction in any format. Find the complete rules and enter online at [_http://www.spoonfulsofstoriescontest.com_](http://www.spoonfulsofstoriescontest.com) (<http://www.spoonfulsofstoriescontest.com/>). *Courtesy Cynthia Sterling.*

Please note that we do not endorse any of these contests and ask that you check the fine print regarding the contest rules and also confirm the deadlines in question. Thank you.

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Have you ever wondered what it's like to be in a high-speed chase and then involved in a shoot-out at the pursuit termination? Do you think the cop who gave you a traffic citation was wrong? Do you know what it's like to tell a mother her only child was killed in a traffic collision? Kathy Bennett has experienced all these things and much more. She'll provide candid information on the life of a cop and answer those "burning" questions you have, but were afraid to ask or didn't know who to ask. For More Information on Kathy and to register for the class please go to

<http://www.lararwa.com/eclassshedule.html>

If you have any questions on the class, please contact Niki Chanel at waysandmeans@lararwa.com or Tamera Flora at programming@lararwa.com

\$15 LARA Members

\$20 for RWA Members

\$25 for Non-members

Airing Dirty Laundry - Use Family Stories, Eavesdropping and Cable TV to Create Writing Income**Date: April 6 - 17, 2009****Instructor: Marilyn Puett****Cost: \$20****Sponsored by: Heart of Dixie**Register at: <http://www.heartofdixie.org/workshop.html>**CLASS DESCRIPTION:**

"Airing Dirty Laundry" offers information and tips on how to create a source of outside income by writing short stories for the confessions and romance magazines. This two-week workshop is geared for writers who want extra income while waiting to sell their first book or are between royalty checks.

Because the course will involve a lot of critique work, the class size will be capped at twenty-five students. For more information please visit online@heartofdixie.org

Show and Tell: An Interactive Workshop**With Shannon Donnelly****April 13, 2009 – May 9, 2009**Enrollment Information at <http://www.occrwa.org/onlineclassApr09.html>

COST: \$20 for OCC members, \$30 for non-members

Enrollment deadline: April 12, 2009

If you have specific questions, email occrwaonlineclass@yahoo.com

"Show, don't Tell" is a cliché that has almost lost its meaning. But "showing" and "telling" are both valuable tools for any writer. In this workshop, we'll use writing examples to figure out the truth hidden in this tired phrase.

The "telling" part of the workshop includes tips, tricks, and techniques to help improve narrative and identify when it's time to tell your story. The "showing" part blends a set of exercises to strengthen an understanding of what makes a scene come to life.

For more information, please visit <http://www.occrwa.org/onlineclassApr09.html>

Join the Beau Monde Academe

Class: Basic Legalities for Regency Novelists with Nancy Mayer

Class Dates: April 20th to May 17th, 2009

Cost: \$25 for Non-Members & \$20 for Members

To register, go to: <http://www.thebeaumonde.com/academe/>

This workshop will cover several areas of the law most useful to the regency novelist. For those who have taken classes with with me in the past, you will find some repetition but this is not a class I have taught before and much of the material will be new. Questions and suggestions are welcome.

Instructor Bio: Nancy has been researching the Regency for decades and trying to write for more years than she likes to remember. She has given several workshops on Regency subjects including one at the BeauMonde conference in Reno. Though not a lawyer or legally trained, she owns several English lawbooks, commentaries and a good dictionary of legal terms. See her webpage for examples of some of the subjects she has covered.

<http://www.susannaives.com/nancyregencyresearcher/>

Put Your Characters in the Driver's Seat: Character Driven Plotting

May 4-30, 2009

Fee: \$30 for Non-PASIC members, \$20 for PASIC members

Deadline to Register: April 29th

Presenter: CJ Lyons

Whether you're a plotter or pantzer, you still need to tell a story.

And to tell a compelling story, you need characters driven to take

action. In this highly interactive workshop, National Bestseller CJ

Lyons will show you how to let your character do the driving as you

move your plot forward. Using methods that students will not only easily remember but can also

apply daily to their writing life, CJ will give you the tools you need to empower your creativity, amp

up your plotting, and energize your

writing! For more information go to: <http://www.pasic.net/workshops.html>

May 2009 — Writing with Magic (for Muggles)

Presented by Susan Sipal

Dates: May 5-26

Deadline: May 3

Though many an envious writer would like to think JK Rowling's secret to success is just a bunch of magical mayhem, we Muggle writers can learn from the skills which have made her Harry Potter series more than beloved, but truly an absolute obsession among millions. Using Ms Rowling's phenomenally popular series as a base, we will delve below the surface of her prose to determine what made her writing so magical for so many. Learn about giving the reader more, the value of subtext, using mythic themes and structure to advantage, plotting a trail-of-clues mystery, and the business of self promotion. Please note that while familiarity with the series is helpful, it is not required. Also, this is not a workshop about writing fantasy (magic), but rather about how to learn techniques from a bestseller in order to improve your own writing and style. While fantasy will be included, the workshop is by no means geared exclusively to that genre.

Instructor bio: Published in fiction and non-fiction through essays, short stories and a novel, S.P. Sipal is a professional writer who also happens to be a Harry Potter fanatic. She has worked seven years in the industry as a writer, editor, and marketing director and has presented multiple workshops, both at home and abroad, either to help writers develop their craft or to analyze the mysteries of Harry Potter. Her most recent release was "Grandma's Cupboards" in On Grandma's

Porch from BelleBooks. Learn more about Susan at SPSipal.com.

**May 2009 — The Top Ten Reasons a Manuscript is Rejected
Presented by Lois Winston**

Dates: May 4-25

Deadline: May 2

For more information, please visit <http://lowcountryrwa.com/online-workshops/#MAY>

Most manuscripts get rejected by agents and editors for one or more of 10 basic reasons. Writers have control over some of these reasons but not all of them. In this workshop award-winning author and agency associate Lois Winston will discuss these 10 reasons and offer suggestions for how writers can control more of their destiny by not falling prey to them.

Instructor Bio: Award-winning author and literary agent Lois Winston writes humorous, cross-genre, contemporary novels and romantic suspense. She often draws upon her extensive experience as an artist and crafts designer for much of her source material. Her first book, TALK GERTIE TO ME, was the recipient of the Readers and Book Buyers Best Award, took second place in both the Beacon Awards and Laurel Wreath Awards, and was nominated for a Reviewers' Choice Award and a Golden Leaf Award. Her second novel, LOVE, LIES AND A DOUBLE SHOT OF DECEPTION, was the winner of the Winter Rose Award for Excellence in Romantic Fiction, the More Than Magic Award, and the Laurie Award. The book also garnered Golden Leaf, Golden Quill, and Beacon nominations. Lois also contributed to several anthologies: DREAMS & DESIRES, VOL. 1, 2, and 3 and HOUSE UNAUTHORIZED. When not writing or designing, you can find Lois trudging through stacks of manuscripts as she hunts for diamonds in the slush piles for the Ashley Grayson Literary Agency. Visit Lois at www.loiswinston.com.

**May 2009 — A Good Old Fashioned Grammar Refresher
Presented by Mallery Mitchell**

Dates: May 6-27

Deadline: May 4

For more information, please visit <http://lowcountryrwa.com/online-workshops/#MAY>

Grammar Refresher is a review and refresher course in grammar. Topics will include punctuation, italics, dialog, dialog tags, capitalization—those wonderful (and some quirky) rules from English class. The Chicago Manual of Style will be used as a reference text, as well as other online resources.

Instructor Bio: Mallery Mitchell is an educator and a multi-published author. Her 2008 release from The Wild Rose Press, ROPED AND TIED, was recently nominated for Best Contemporary Book by Night Owl Romance Reviews. www.mallerymitchell.us

Please note that we do not endorse any of these online courses and ask that you check the fine print regarding the online course rules and also confirm the deadlines in question. Thank you.

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Conferences:

Romantic Times Booklovers Convention

April 22-26 • Orlando, Florida

What sets the RT BOOKLOVERS CONVENTION apart from any other book industry convention? We mix business and networking with fellowship and fun. For more information, please visit www.rtconvention.com.

Princeton University Romance Symposium

April 23-24 • Princeton, New Jersey

Eloisa James (Mary Bly) and Jennifer Crusie are among the panelists.

This two-day symposium will be the first national conference to focus on the multiple ways that romance novels—long the most maligned of literary texts—can provide rich critical insight for the study of American culture, politics, and society. This explicitly contextual, interdisciplinary, and American focus represents a rich new direction for the field of romance fiction studies.

Please visit this link for more info: <http://www.princeton.edu/prcw/>

Registration is free but seating is limited

Fifth Annual New York Round Table Writers' ®

April 24 - April 25, 2009.

Join more than 75 publishing industry insiders - including editors, agents, publicists, authors, and publishers - as they discuss strategies for finding publishing success. This is the leading writers' conference on the business of finding publishing success. If you have work ready for publication, this is the one conference you will want to attend."

Learn more and register at www.WritersConferenceNYC.org.

Connecticut Fiction Fest

May 2, 2009 • Meriden, CT

Appointments to pitch your novel to editors from major publishing houses and agents from prestigious literary agencies.

Workshops on craft, marketing, getting published and writers life.

The opportunity to network with other writers and industry professionals. A book signing, participation in which is open to all attending published authors with books currently in print. For more information please visit <http://ctrwa.org/ignite-your-muse/>.

Bucks County Romance Writers

2nd annual HOOK 'EM FROM PAGE ONE

May 13, 2009 • Buckingham, PA

Deadline to Register is April 15, 2009

Want to hear the reactions of the pros to the first page of your manuscript? This is your chance to better understand how editors and agents review submissions. You may hear what our panel of editors and agents thinks of your work. Only 80 spaces are available and space will fill quickly. One entry per person only. We will read as many as possible, but there is no guarantee your first page will be one of those read. We expect to have time to read 10 to 15 first pages. The pages read will be chosen randomly from the submissions received by the May 1, 2009. The workshop fee must be received by April 15, 2009 to have your first page considered. For more information please visit <http://www.buckscorw.org>.

Pennwriters Conference

May 15-17, 2009 • Pittsburgh

Pitch agents and editors at Pennwriters 22nd Annual Conference. Three-day conference offers 30-plus sessions, intensive seminars, special guest speaker Lisa Scottoline. For more information, please visit, www.pennwriters.com.

Backspace Writers Conference

May 28-30 • New York City

The 2009 Backspace Writers Conference brings together literary agents, acquisitions editors, best-selling authors, and publishing professionals for a two-day, two-track program of workshops, panels, and networking in the heart of the publishing world. Attendance limited to 200. For more information, please visit www.backspacewritersconference.com.

IWWG's 32nd Conference Year

Remember the Magic Workshops

June 12-19; Post Conference Retreat June 20-21

May 28-30 • Saratoga Springs, New York

All 65 workshops take place every single day for the week-long period and are 75 minutes in length, unless otherwise noted. Special features of this conference: Registrants do not register for individual workshops. You register for the conference as a whole and then you are free to go to any workshops you wish and make your own program. Anne Frazier Walradt, one of our founding members teaches a humor workshop at this conference. For more information, please visit iwwg.org.

The Mississippi Writers Guild

August 14-15 • Vicksburg, MS

Riverwalk Casino Hotel and Conference Facility

Vicksburg, MS

Join Mississippi Writers Guild for its third annual writers conference. This conference facility

overlooks the Mighty Mississippi and, as its name promises, has a breathtaking art riverwalk adorned with metal sculptures. For more information please visit <http://www.mississippiwritersquild.com/>.

Please note that we do not endorse any of these conferences and ask that you check the fine print regarding the conference and also confirm the deadlines in question. Thank you.

If you wish to volunteer to do the Contests, Conferences and Online Courses section, please contact Anne Walradt.

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Market News:

Editor News:

Annette Pollert has been promoted to assistant editor at Simon & Schuster's Simon Pulse. *Courtesy Publishers Lunch.*

Alexandra Cooper has been promoted to senior editor at Simon & Schuster Children's. *Courtesy Publishers Lunch.*

Nick Trautwein will join The Penguin Press as editor on April 6. *Courtesy Publishers Lunch.*

Juliet Grames and Aaron Schlechter have both been promoted to Editor at The Overlook Press. *Courtesy Publishers Lunch.*

Sara Goodman has been promoted to Associate Editor at St. Martin's Press. *Courtesy Publishers Lunch.*

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Agent News:

Jenny Bent has left Trident Media Group to form The Bent Agency. *Courtesy Publishers Lunch.*

Agents Jill Marsal and Kevan Lyon have left the Sandra Dijkstra Agency to form the Marsal Lyon Literary Agency. Agent Kelly Sonnack has left the Sandra Dijkstra Literary Agency after nearly three years to join the Andrea Brown Literary Agency. *Courtesy Publishers Lunch.*

At the Sandra Dijkstra Agency veteran Andrea Cavallaro has been hired as a subrights director. *Courtesy Publishers Lunch.*

At the Emma Sweeney Agency, Eva Talmadge has been promoted to agent, and Justine Wenger has been promoted to junior agent. *Courtesy Publishers Lunch.*

Agent Simon Green has joined CAA. Cathy Hemming has moved her eponymous literary agency to McCormick & Williams. *Courtesy Publishers Lunch.*

Agent Brendan Deneen has joined FinePrint Literary Management. Deneen is interested in thrillers and YA. *Courtesy Publishers Lunch.*

Melissa Sarver has moved to the Elizabeth Kaplan Literary Agency. *Courtesy Publishers Lunch.*

Agent Eric Simonoff is leaving Janklow & Nesbit to join William Morris. *Courtesy Publishers Lunch.*

Paul Rodeen has left Sterling Lord Literistic to establish Rodeen Literary Management. The agency will remain in Chicago and continue to focus on children's book authors and illustrators. *Courtesy Publishers Lunch.*

Rebecca Gradinger has left Janklow & Nesbit Associates and launched Finchley Road Literary. *Courtesy Publishers Lunch.*

At Bliss Literary, Willy Blackmore has been named an associate agent. *Courtesy Publishers Lunch.*

Stacia Decker and Danielle Chiotti have joined Firebrand Literary as agents. *Courtesy Publishers Lunch.*

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Publisher News:

Daniel Ehrenhaft joins Sourcebooks as a middle grade and YA acquisitions editor in their New York offices. *Courtesy Publishers Lunch.*

At Faber, Hannah Griffiths has been appointed Director of Paperback Publishing. Sarah Savitt has been promoted to Editor. *Courtesy Publishers Lunch.*

Assistant editor Ben Steinberg has been hired as an assistant editor at the Random House imprint. *Courtesy Mediabistro.*

Janetta Otter-Barry will start up her own line of books within Frances Lincoln. Otter-Barry will produce approximately 20 titles a year, a mix of picture books, information books and young fiction. Maurice Lyon is being promoted to the editorial director position. *Courtesy Publishers Lunch.*

HarperCollins is launching a new imprint, It Books, run by publisher Carrie Kania, with Mauro di Preta serving as associate publisher and Cal Morgan as editorial director. Kania and Morgan remain as publisher and editorial director of Harper Perennial, too. The line launches in September 2009. *Courtesy Publishers Lunch.*

Miscellaneous News:

SunDrop, a new fiction imprint of New Concord Press (EGPG) is preparing to publish two anthologies: in fall 2009 and early winter 2010. These themed anthologies will contain 6 stories each, and be published in trade paperback, e-book, and Kindle formats.

Seasons of Romance: Winter Love (a SunDrop Sunbeam)
In the chill of winter, nothing beats curling up with a great romance! And winter has its advantages too for providing backgrounds and situations that beg for love to bloom. A ski lodge, a cozy cabin, a crackling fire, a snowball fight? Stories can be in any era, any place, and any subgenre (except young adult and erotic romance).

Wander Lust: Erotic Romance in All the Best Places (a SunDrop Scorcher)
Nothing loosens the inhibitions like a trip to a far-away romantic spot. Dig into your deepest, wildest dreams and give us the best and sexiest fantasy trip ever! Any era, any place, anything goes, just be sure to carefully read the submission guidelines. Visit <http://www.newconcordpress.com> then scroll down to SunDrop. *Courtesy Cynthia Sterling.*

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New and Noteworthy Publishing News:

Please click on the link to access the article:

[Amazon Backs Off Text-to-Speech Feature in Kindle](#)

[American History, Romance, Science Fiction and Fantasy Sales are up](#)

[Anderson News Suspends Business Activity](#)

[Baker and Taylor on Bottom Rung](#)

[Barnes & Noble Acquires Fictionwise](#)

[Danielle Steel is going digital](#)

[FiledByAuthor Launches Public Beta Site](#)

[Harlequin Posts Strong Results](#)

[Mystery author Barbara Parker, 62, died this weekend after a long illness](#)

[Picador Launches 140-Character Book Club](#)

[Random House UK to layoff 5% of staff \(about 30 members\)](#)

[SXSW Publishing Panel Sparks Fireworks](#)

[Writers Guild to cut workers amid shortfall](#)

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Current Bestsellers:

Please click on the text to access the link:

[Booksense Indie Bestsellers](#)

[NY Times Bestsellers](#)

[Publishers Weekly](#)

[USA Today Bestsellers](#)

[Washington Post Bestsellers](#)

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www.libertystateswriters.com

www.lsfwriters.com

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President's Column by Gail Freeman



Gail Freeman, President

My intent is to use this column to keep you up to date on what is happening at Liberty States Fiction Writers. Much of the work of the Board is handled between meetings because, as I've stated before, we believe the meetings should be about the writing and not the day to day operations of the group. So, let me tell you what we've been up to.

First, Treasurer Michele Richter is opening up her home on May 2, 2009, to host a kickoff party for the Mayke It Happen Challenge. It will give members a chance to network with fellow writers, do a little brainstorming and help build the community spirit for the event. All members are welcome even if you are not in the Challenge, but we hope you will join and use it as a vehicle to jumpstart your writing. Look for details in the newsletter.

Each year, romance writer Brenda Novak organizes an auction to benefit Children's Diabetes. Liberty States is putting together a basket of books and writing materials to donate. If you have something that you would like to contribute, please contact Secretary Charity Scordato at cpsromance@att.net.

For those who were not at the meeting, we took a poll to see how many would be interested in having a "Movie Day" to analyze the "Hero's Journey." Newsletter editor Anne Walradt has graciously offered her home to host this event. Since there is no meeting in August, it has been decided to hold this event that month. As we get closer to the day we'll supply more details.

We're still plugging away on the Policies and Procedures Manual. As we clarify each event or job, we are adding it to the document. Currently we are working on the benefits for the Salon for Emerging Authors (SEA). Member Kathy Fawcett is the liaison for this group. Anyone who has completed a manuscript is eligible to be in SEA. We will also be including any member who completes the Mayke It Happen Challenge. Kathy is currently gathering names and ideas from those eligible for SEA. Please contact her and let her know that you qualify, and, of course, if you have an idea about what SEA can do to help you reach the next level, she'd be delighted to hear about it.

SPA (Salon for Published Authors) is beginning to look into promotional venues for our authors. One of the events planned is to participate in a number of street fairs throughout the state. So far it has been decided to register for the fairs in Red Bank, Somerset and Jamesburg. SPA coordinators Tara Huff and CH Admirand will be putting out the call for participating authors in the near future.

I've saved the best for last. The final piece of business that the Board has set in place is a one day Mini-Conference to be held on March 13, 2010! Vice President Rayna Vause has gotten an awesome deal with the Woodbridge Conference Center (formerly the Woodbridge Sheraton) to hold

the one day event. We are currently working on our headline speaker for the event and will share the news as soon as we have a firm commitment. The tentative plans are to have two tracks of workshops running throughout the day, as well as editor and agent appointments. In preparation of the event, we will be sending announcements about the formation of Liberty States Fiction Writers to all the major publishing houses, as well as a listing of agents. If any member has an editor or agent who they feel should receive an announcement, please inform any Board member and we will add them to our mailing list.

When the Founders gathered around the table and came up with the idea of a new writing organization we never dreamed that we would move forward so far, so fast. The support of all of the members has been a blessing to us, and it's been a joy to see the excitement that has been generated amongst the members. One belief that we all share is that you, the members, are our greatest source of inspiration. If you have an idea or a comment, please send it to any Board member. While we can't promise to act on every suggestion, we can promise that each idea will be given serious consideration. So let us know your thoughts. We really do want to know!

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10-11 Steps to Building a character (It should be so easy.) by Shelley Freydont

10- 11 Steps to Building a character (It should be so easy.)

Not all characters are created equal. There are primary characters. In Romance there's a hero and heroine. In mystery there's a detective and a side kick/partner/love interest. In a thriller, the hero and /villain/love interest. There are secondary characters, walk ons and bit parts. All require different amounts of development and have different aspects to be developed. How much they are developed also depends on whether the story is an action story or one that is character driven.

Whether a story has one protagonist or two, they will be the most developed people in your cast. And they must resonate with the reader. Where do you start?

1-Essential ingredients. A character needs a **physical appearance, emotions, and a view point.** (Not to be confused with Point of View, a subject for a different article.) He cares and feels passionately about something(or refuses to feel), has strong opinions and convictions he/she is willing to fight for. (at least by the end of the story.)

2-First impressions. (How we see, hear, and sense a person.)

Physical description. When you meet someone, you don't see every thing at once. And neither should a reader. At first there may be a general impression, long hair, short stature, black glasses, bad fashion statement. (Later we notice smaller things: eye color, the way she tilts head when she listens, the mole on her neck.) Work in more description as the character becomes more familiar to the POV character.

Descriptions can tell us more than physical aspects of the character. For instance, instead of immediately going to the sensuous green eyes, have her lower her head when they meet. Is she shy? Coy? Has something to hide? Lost a contact?

When her head is lowered, he notices her hair. Then when she raises her head, he gets a close up of the smoldering green eyes. Zinger. Romance ahead. She turns away. How does she move? Graceful? Stealthily? Forget the adjectives and describe the action through the eyes of the other protagonist. What does the body do and how?

Give him dialogue and let us hear who he is. How does he talk? Accent? Too quiet? Abrasive? Forked tongue? Let them tell us with their words and delivery.

What do we sense about him, what *aren't* we seeing? What things about the body language or the voice is sending the wrong signals? Or the right signals.

3-What makes them tick? As Shrek says, “ogres are like onions.” So are characters. Peel away their layers; each step will expose them, explain more about them, until you get to the still point where everything is invested.

4-Build on your character’s strengths, exploit his weaknesses.

Portray his likes, dislikes, habits, and do this in little ways before the crisis that really tests him. What is his self image? How do others perceive him? What does he care about, is loyal to, afraid of, hates, loves. How far is he willing to go for these? Slowly introduce these like sifting flour into a recipe, don’t dump it all at once. Character is portrayed in increments and grows with the growing conflict.

5-Give them a fatal flaw. Well maybe not fatal, but a serious flaw. We all know about the bully who’s really an insecure mess because his mother didn’t love him. Push the parameters of stock characters, find a twist on the classic black/white dichotomies. Introduce us to his conflict in small ways, he’s a dynamo in the board room, but angst’s over what tie goes with his suit. Built in hti sway, he’ll be believable by the time he gets to the final showdown. Give him a secretor a fear, something that is going to explode during the story.

6-Conflict. Put your character in his comfort zone and push him out of it. Put him in a situation that challenges his belief, emotion, or loyalty. Characters grow when their gestalt is threatened.

Subject your characters to a lot of internal/external conflict. That’s how we see how they really feel, how they’ll really grow. If everything always goes their way, how interesting would that be? Different characters react differently to conflict. They don’t have the same reasons, backgrounds, loyalties, fears. What is their motivation?

Put in the same situation, one might react to the external conflict while the other reacts to the internal conflict. Two people lost in a cave. It’s dark, there are bats. She has to get out to stop the bad guys from blowing up the day care center, but the darkness and attacking bats slow her down. She doesn’t notice that he can barely move. He’s going blind and knows that soon his whole world will be as black as the cave. The cave means a whole different thing to him. Both conflicts are big, but not the same. If both of them have to get out to save the day care center, you’ve got a thriller, but not much character development.

Make the conflict specific. Make his/her reaction to it specific. An external crisis setting off the internal.

7-Tag. This is a cheat sheet for remembering characters. It can be descriptive: fiery red hair, a limp, a lisp. Though don’t get carried away and have a one eyed, hunchbacked, dyslexic detective (It’s already been done.) A little goes a long way.

It can be a quirk; she always slurps when she drinks coffee.

A stutter, an annoying giggle, a nervous habit.

Introduce this tag enough times to make the character memorable, but use the tag in context. He meets a girl at a party. She tilts her head while they talk, as if she’s really listening to what he says. He thinks it’s charming. He falls for her.

Later, as they get familiar with each other, the tilt begins to drive him crazy. He gets annoyed. Even later, he realizes she only tilts her head when she’s about to lie.

What? We didn’t see that coming, but it sounds interesting. Is it something we want to incorporate into the story? Back to the first meet. Is there a way to work it so that she lies in the first meet, and subsequently, but neither the hero nor the reader realizes it? This may change the direction of the story and we give it the axe. Or it might be just the device we were looking for. The tag becomes more than a mnemonic device it becomes an active part of the plot.

8-Audition them. I was at a workshop where the speaker said, “Live with them, then let them live.” Okay. I live with my neighbors, but I certainly wouldn’t put them in a book. Well, maybe one or two of them.

Living with your characters before writing them is not just peaceful coexistence. It's having them in your face twenty-four seven. They act out, talk back and have secrets. They'll make up their own scenes. But you're the boss. Run them through a scene. Have them exchange roles. Rewind, give them a different reaction; see which one fits, keep changing the rules until they're firm in your mind.

Walk in their shoes/play both sides. Be your character/react to your character. Get invested. Be them, but stay in control.

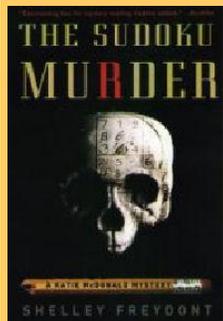
Act out their parts, but not while you're waiting for the bus. People will look at you oddly.

9-Challenge them. Make sure you want them in your story. Are they tough enough? Lovable enough? Interesting? Multi-dimensional? Do they care enough to risk everything? Can they take direction? Either way, before you start to write you'll already know what makes these suckers tick and have a sense of how you want to use them. But be open to learn more about them along the way.

10-Make them grow. Where did they start? Why? Where did they end? How did they get there?

The growth can be huge or small depending on your genre, but it has to happen. And it doesn't happen all at once. And it must make a logical progression, even though it might be brought about by extremes. But the foundation for growth needs to be built in at the beginning. Growth is a process in life and in fiction.

11-Read Dwight Swain.



About the Author: Shelley Freydont is the author of the Katie McDonald Sudoku mystery series and Lindy Haggerty mystery series and as well as several romance novels under the pseudonym Gemma Bruce. A former professional dancer and choreographer, Shelley is past president of Sisters-in-Crime, NY, NJ, CN and a member of Mystery Writers of America, Liberty States Fiction Writers and Romance Writers of America. For more information on Shelley, please visit www.shelleyfreydont.com.

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Homonyms

By Pattie Giordani

This article first appeared in Bouquet of Romance March 2009, Pocono Lehigh RW, Easton, PA. Permission to forward with proper credit.

Back to Basics

This month's column is a compilation of two columns from May and June 2004 that discussed words that are often confused and how to use them correctly. Almost every day, I still see the same mistakes-in the newspaper, advertisements, books, e-mails, letters, and more.

To successfully practice the craft of writing, we must have command of the language, including knowing the difference between words that sound the same or almost the same as each other.

A homonym is a word with the same pronunciation as another but with a different meaning, origin and, usually, spelling.

Its, it's: Its is the possessive of it (Has your dog had its shots this year?). It's is a contraction for either it is (It's going to rain today) or it has (It's been a long day).

Their, they're, there: There is the possessive of they (Is that their cat?). There is a contraction for they are (They're going to Italy.) There means at or in that place" (Put the table over there.)

To, too, two: To means in the direction of (Go to the end of the street). Too means in addition (She has a cat too). Two is the number between one and three" (She has two cats).

Whose, who's: Whose is the possessive of who (Whose car is that?). Who's is a contraction for either who is (Who's going with me?) or who has (Anyone who's finished may leave now.)

Your, you're: Your is the possessive of you (Here's your hat). You're is a contraction of you are (You're very welcome).

Remember: An apostrophe is standing in for the missing letters in a contraction.

The following words are similar-sounding but have different meanings.

Accept: allow
Except: not including

Access: entry to
Excess: too much

Adverse: difficult
Averse: opposed to

Advice: (noun) counsel
Advise: (verb) to give counsel

Affect: to influence
Effect: consequence

Allude: to refer to
Elude: to escape

Allusion: a reference
Illusion: a false impression

Are: form of the verb to be
Our: possessive pronoun

Breath: (noun) an inhalation
Breathe: (verb) to inhale

Conscience: moral guide
Conscious: aware of

Device: a thing, plan, scheme
Devise: to fashion

Elicit: to evoke
Illicit: illegal

Eminent: famous
Imminent: about to occur

Faith: belief, confidence
Fate: destiny

Loose: not fastened
Lose: to misplace

Moral: virtuous
Morale: spirit, feeling

Personal: private
Personnel: work force

Quiet: not noisy
Quite: very

Than: compared with
Then: at that time

Through: across
Thorough: complete, entire

Wear: to have on
Were: past tense of the verb to be

If you're not sure of the meaning, look it up. Editors know the difference.

Questions? Grammar gripes? Send them to me at pattieq1@ptd.net

About the Author: Pattie Giordani is an editor at a national nonprofit association and freelances for newspapers and magazines. Previously she was assistant features editor at a daily newspaper, and has taught noncredit courses in grammar and writing at a local community college. She is president and publicity chair for the Pocono-Lehigh Romance

Writers and writes a grammar column for the monthly newsletter.

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Back to the Beginning

by Alicia Rasley

Back to the Beginning—The Scene's First Paragraphs

Let's start at the start, that is, the all-important first paragraphs in the scene. I say "back to the beginning" because you shouldn't worry about this so much when you are drafting the book or scene. But when you're done with a draft, try going back to the beginning (of the book or the scene) to revise, rewrite, or reinvent the opening.

There was a trend recently that called for opening scenes "in media res"—with some kind of clever line (the "hook"), or sudden action or a line of dialogue. This can be effective in drawing the reader in, but keeping her in requires more than clever lines. It requires a paragraph or two that anchors the scene in some specific place, time, and situation. The reader needs that to make any sense of your clever hook. This is especially true when you start with a line of dialogue:

"The beheadings are almost identical," said Joe Watson, placing his memo on the walnut expanse of Arthur Mahoney's worktable. Watson resisted the impulse to retrieve the memo on beheadings from the senior partner's elbow and check it again for typos.

Brainstorm, by Richard Dooling

There's the magnetic dialogue line (who can resist a good beheading?), but then immediately who said it (Joe) and in what context (a memo to a senior partner—must be a law firm).

So yes, draw the reader in. But set up the scene too, in an opening that is both intriguing and illuminating. This is probably difficult to do well in the initial draft of the scene, because you won't know entirely what it is you're setting up. But once you finish writing a scene, or the whole story draft, go back and examine your scene openings. Here is where you establish the initial POV for the scene, and use it as a filter to impart the scene's tone, setting, and approach.

First, make sure that scene openings aren't going to get repetitive. To verify this, read over just the first paragraph of each chapter in rapid succession. When I did this for one book, I found that I'd started four chapters with "The next morning...."

It was a boring way to start—as if the time was always the most important factor—and the repetition was dulling. The opening should open this chapter or scene, and so should be unique.

Then start guiding the reader in the right direction:

- Readers are going to get confused by a complicated first paragraph, so simplify the syntax—the word choice and sentence structure.
- Experiment with shorter paragraphs, just because they feel more comprehensible.
- Be very careful about sending signals you don't want to send, or conflicting signals, as the reader has no context at this point to sort the contradictions out (like talking about sunlight when it turns out they're indoors).
- Don't throw more than a couple names at them early, and the first name mentioned should be that of the POV character—it's a signal to the reader whose head we're in.
- Start as close to the action of the scene as you can. If it's about the night of Joan's re-election, start in that day or night, not the earlier candidate's debate. Scenes should be unified in time and place, so if you are starting a chapter, say, with some kind of background, a line break (four or five

blank lines) will signal that only after that are you starting the actual scene.

- Start with a tone that you're going to keep. If the first paragraph is funny, and the rest of the scene is serious, the reader might sue for false advertising!
- Begin as you mean to go on.

Don't waste the valuable real estate of the first paragraph. Find a way to answer at least some of the reader's automatic questions:

Where are we?
When are we?
Who are we?
What's the problem?
Why are we here?

You probably can't answer all those questions in the opening. But give the reader the information and the insight he'll need to understand the scene as it develops.

Read over the scene and decide which of those questions are most imperative, especially considering your POV approach.

The point of an omniscient opening is to quickly establish time, place, and situation, so that you can get launched into the action of the scene. One way to start such an opening is with a tagline, or dateline, as reporters call it—the quick line at the top of the scene that identifies the time and date. Sometimes this line is in italics.

This is so conventional the reader absorbs it without much fuss, and it is especially useful for historical novels, where it's hard to work in that essential information. The tagline leads equally well into omniscient or personal POV, but you'll see it most often with an omniscient opening.

Medicine Creek, Kansas. Early August. Sunset.

The great sea of yellow corn stretches from horizon to horizon under an angry sky. When the wind rises the corn stirs and rustles as if alive, and when the wind dies down again the corn falls silent. The heat wave is now in its third week, and dead air hovers over the corn in shimmering curtains.

Still Life With Crows, by Lincoln Child, Douglas Preston

Here, with the tagline establishing the where and when, the omniscient narration can get right into establishing the ominous tone of the scene with words like "angry" and "rustles" and "dies" and "dead", and the immediacy of the scene conflict (the heat wave) with the present tense. This scene is about a place and a time and a problem— a rural area during a summer heat wave—and not about a person, and that's set up in the very first paragraph.

But in a more personal scene, don't leave the reader adrift in the existential void too long. Who are we? is the most essential question in a scene that begins in a personal POV. So even if the scene is going into multiple POV, start in a character and stick with that viewpoint for a page at least. This is the time you establish not only the character but the world, so give one perspective on it to keep it coherent. It helps, especially if this is the first time we've encountered this character, to use the name early. That doesn't just identify the character, but also the POV approach as personal. Consider using some thought or feeling verb early on to establish that we're inside a particular person, as in this passage where Yossarian falls madly in love.

It was love at first sight.

The first time Yossarian saw the chaplain he fell madly in love with him.

Yossarian was in the hospital with a pain in his liver that fell just short of being jaundice. The doctors were puzzled by the fact that it wasn't quite jaundice. If it became jaundice they could treat it. If it didn't become jaundice and went away they could discharge him. But this just being short of jaundice all the time confused them.

Catch-22, by Joseph Heller

Look for places to insert essential information in a subtle way. For example, Heller identifies the setting as "the hospital" in the third line. But if you wanted to establish that setting quickly and then go into his love at first sight, you might just insert the word "hospital" in front of chaplain: The first time Yossarian saw the hospital chaplain he fell madly in love with him.

If the POV character is in some kind of trouble, logically that'll be on her mind. So at least hint at the problem early and draw the reader into sympathy:

Alive!

Still alive.

Alive...again.

Awakening was hard, as always. The ultimate disappointment. It was a struggle to take in enough air to drive off nightmare sensations of asphyxiation. Lilith lay gasping, shaking with the force of her effort.

Her heart beat too fast, too loud. She curled around it, fetal, helpless.

Circulation began to return to her arms and legs in flurries of minute, exquisite pains.

Dawn, by Octavia E. Butler

Notice the power of individual words, particularly modifiers (adjectives and adverbs), in defining the inside experience of the POV character. Butler uses extreme words like "ultimate" and "nightmare" and "exquisite," as well as the motif of birth (fetal) to portray the pain of waking. This passage also creates a question in the reader's mind: Why is waking alive so painful to her? This enhances the interactive reading experience, as the reader will start speculating about the answer even before the scene provides it.

Part of the interactive experience for the reader is visualizing the scene. This is especially important, I think, with our readers, who have grown up "seeing" fiction on TV. So it helps to jot down exactly what the scene looks like as you start revising, and look for adjectives and adverbs that unobtrusively convey something about the character's surroundings.

Perhaps the most important setting detail is the light, as that can tell us if this is day or night, inside or outside, sunny or overcast, bright noon or just after dawn.

Establish light quickly, as that "illuminates" the scene and is going to make all the difference to how the reader visualizes here. So see if you can put in a "light" word within the first two sentences. I know that sounds mechanical, but the reader needs that to build the picture. For example, "the sun was setting as he jammed his spurs..." or "Bill squinted through the dim bedroom light at..." or "the moonlit plateau spread out in front of me...."

Expand the vision into the other senses by getting into your POV character's body and perceiving in her individual way. If you can insert emotion or action in with the setting-establishment lines, all the better:

Jane had to shout to be heard over drone of the airplane engines. But that was okay. She felt like shouting anyway.

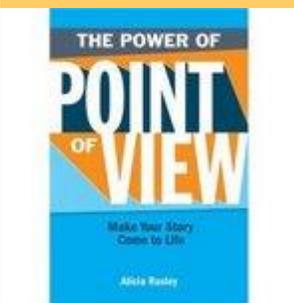
There was the smell of something rotting in the air, and his heart sank. He was too late.

Along with the fear, he could taste the metallic tang of his own blood, and he struck out blindly with both fists.

Let the viewpoint character live in the setting, interact with it in minor ways. The first few paragraphs is where the reader gets anchored in the narration, so don't leave her flailing around in open sea, trying to find that anchor. After those first paragraphs, the reader can visualize the setting and is firmly parked in the proper POV, and won't need so much context-setting. Then you can get started on the action.

Quick checklist:

1. Is it clear in the first few paragraphs where we are? That is, are we outside in the parking lot, or inside the executive dining room? Just a few words ("Out in the empty parking lot") might be enough to anchor the scene in the setting.
2. Will the reader know what time of day is it? You can state this right out: "It was 3 am before Tom tracked his brother down in a rickety bar perched on the end of the city pier." Or you can use physical details to clue the reader in: "She shielded her eyes against the afternoon light."
3. Is it clear whose POV are we in? If you start in an omniscient viewpoint, when do you descend into a personal viewpoint? How do you establish this POV character's goal/agenda for the scene, or state of mind or emotional condition?
4. Remember, the scene is a unit of change— something changes during the course of the scene. Do you have some "before" situation established, or are we at the beginning or in the middle of some event of change? For example, is the heroine about ready to go into a job interview or visit her mother in jail, or is she halfway through her truckdriver's exam when a tire blows out? We need some glimpse of what the situation was like before in order to put the change-to-come into context.
5. And don't forget this opening sets up the beginning point of the emotional arc. Where does the POV character start out emotionally? How do you establish it?
6. Hardest question-- is this the best place to start? I tend to write around until I find the real scene opening, which might be where the action starts, or just before some big change, or when two people meet, or whatever. That's fine-- however we find our way is okay. But my problem is-- I'm not good at cutting all that intro material that isn't really needed! So I'm trying to start the scene as late as possible, and putting all the transitional/positioning stuff (time, place, situation) in a paragraph or so as the action starts. Spending a couple minutes thinking about what the real opening should be saves me far more in writing time.



About the Author: Alicia Rasley is an award-winning novelist and a nationally known teacher of writing. Her book, *The Power of Point of View*, was released in 2008 by *Writer's Digest Books*. Her writing articles are collected on www.rasley.com. She lives in Indianapolis with her husband and two college-student sons.

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**Virginia's Guide to Guy-Speak
By Virginia Kantra**

Critics have argued that the romance genre portrays men not as they are but as women wish they would be. When it comes to physical descriptions, this is often true. But I love men. Guys. I love the way they walk and stand and laugh and smell. I'm lucky because my husband is a guy (the evolved model guy, but very guy-like) and I have two sons – we'll call them Georgetown Boy and He Whose

Body Is a Temple – who pound on each other and laugh like Beavis and Butthead and communicate in ways that are still sometimes a mystery to me.

To illustrate how gender impacts characterization, point of view, action, and dialogue - okay, pretty much everything - I offer this guide to guy-speak.

The scene is from **Guilty Secrets**,
Silhouette Intimate Moments, April 2004, pp.51-54.

With commentary in CAPS.

But thinking about Nell, undressing Nell, only made him more frustrated in a different way. Physically frustrated. Sexually frustrated. GUYs THINK ABOUT SEX.

He reached again for his cigarettes. Hell. GUYs SWEAR. Crushing the empty box in his hand, he lofted it across the living room toward the wastebasket. GUYs DO THIS. I DON'T KNOW WHY.

He missed. Loser.

In his front hall, the doorbell rasped like the final buzzer at a Bulls game. GUYs THINK IN SPORTS ANALOGIES.

Joe hobbled across the bare hardwood floor to the door and peered through the security glass at the side. Two men, one in uniform, occupied his front stoop.

Joe yanked open the door. "What the hell are you doing here?" GUYs ARE NOT TOUCHY FEELY.

His middle brother Will walked in without asking. "Ma was worried when you bailed on dinner." NOT "I" WAS WORRIED. GUYs DON'T WORRY. AND IF THEY DO, THEY DON'T ADMIT IT.

Mike followed, thrusting a round Tupperware container into Joe's hands. "She sent us with leftovers. Got any beer?" GUYs ARE DIRECT.

His family. He loved them, admired them, let them down... And right now, he wanted them to go away.

"No."

No alcohol. It was something else he was learning to deny himself. Mike snorted. "God, now I'm worried about you, too. WHICH HE CAN ONLY SAY BECAUSE IT'S A SLAM. What about coffee?"

"Instant. And you'll have to make it yourself."

"Okay. In the pantry, right?" Without waiting for an answer, Mike snatched back the covered dish and carried it through to the kitchen. A cupboard door banged. A drawer slammed. GUYs CHOOSE ACTION OVER DISCUSSION. AND THEY MAKE NOISE.

With a curse, Joe limped after him.

"You're not walking too good," Will observed behind him. GUYs DO NOT ALWAYS SPEAK IN GRAMATICALLY PERFECT CONSTRUCTIONS. "You hurt your ankle again?"

Joe gritted his teeth. He supposed it was too much to hope Will wouldn't notice. "Nope. Just overdid it the past couple days."

"Is that why you blew off dinner?"

"No. I told Ma. I have a deadline."

"You still have to eat," Will said.

Joe regarded his brother with loathing. "You sound exactly like Ma, you know that?"

Will grinned at him, five feet ten inches of compact, confident Chicago firefighter. "Say that when you're on both feet, paperboy, and I'll take you down." GUYS SHOW AFFECTION BY CALLING EACH OTHER INSULTING NAMES AND THREATENING VIOLENCE. AGAIN, I DON'T KNOW WHY.

It was the kind of threat he used to make before the accident. Even with his brother's qualifier--when you're on both feet--the taunt improved Joe's mood. OTHER GUYS UNDERSTAND THIS.

The microwave pinged from the kitchen.

"Dinner's ready," Mike called. NOTICE WILL TALKS, MIKE COOKS. GUYS DON'T MULTI-TASK.

The scent of Mary Reilly's lamb and onions permeated the hall. The house was small, with one bedroom on the ground floor and a couple of others upstairs that Joe had barely seen. Eight months ago, when he bought the place, the layout had been the house's key selling point. He still couldn't negotiate the stairs easily.

Stumping into the kitchen, Joe dug a spoon from the drawer. Will filled a kettle for water. Mike rescued the plastic container of stew from the microwave and slid it across the table. GUYS DO NOT SET THE TABLE UNLESS SOMEONE MAKES THEM DO IT.

Joe lowered himself cautiously onto a chair, cupping the Tupperware in one hand. The smell reminded him of decades of Sunday dinners eaten off his mother's lace tablecloth in his parents' dining room. The solid weight of the container in his hand was warm and comforting.

"Thanks," he said gruffly.

Will lifted one shoulder in a shrug. No big deal. IT'S THAT TOUCHY FEELY STUFF AGAIN.

"Mom made us come," said Mike. "She and Pop are worried you're not getting out enough."

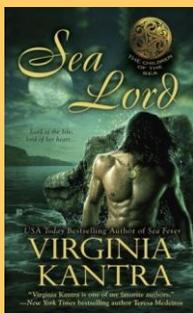
"Oh, like you do," Joe retorted. "You still live in their basement."

"I like saving money."

"You like Ma doing your laundry," Joe said.

"Yeah, well, a year ago she was emptying your bedpan and bringing your meals on a tray," Mike said. "So I don't want to hear it." GUYS ARE COMPETITIVE/ CONSCIOUS OF RANK. THEY USE CONVERSATION TO ESTABLISH STATUS, NOT TO CREATE EMPATHY.

An awkward silence fell.



About the Author: USA Today bestselling author Virginia Kantra credits her husband and sons for giving her a working knowledge of Guy Speak. A six-time RITA award finalist, she is currently writing the next installment of her paranormal romance series for Berkley, The Children of the Sea. Look for Sea Lord in May 2009. Visit her on the web at <http://virginiakantra.com>.

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The Plot Thickens Part 1 by Jenna Kernan

Part I – The Setup

The Inciting Incident

Screenwriters have an interesting perspective on plot. Robert McKee, famous for his STORY seminar, divides a plot into five distinct parts: the Inciting Incident, Progressive Complications, Crisis, Climax and Resolution. Screenwriting guru Michael Hague prefers six parts, which he calls: Opportunity, Change of Plans, Point of No Return, Major Setback and Climax.

This article will explore a story's opening in greater detail. This includes the time just prior to change and the change itself.

Most stories do include a setup, also called the Introduction of Characters or the Ordinary World. Screenwriters do not consider the setup a story event. Rather they hold that anything before the Inciting Incident is introduction. This introduction is a vital, but should be kept as short as possible. The type of story you are telling helps determine the length and type of set up needed. One consideration is whether the writer needs to develop empathy for the protagonist before the Inciting Incident/Opportunity, which marks the moment when the protagonist's life is changed. If the plot is complicated or has many characters, the introduction will generally be longer.

Most tales begin with your protagonist's ordinary world. Remember that ordinary does not mean boring. One of the responsibilities of the setup is to intrigue the audience.

Ordinary is a relative word. Life as a prizefighter is very different from life for a hostage negotiator and both can be extremely interesting.

Although the setup is not an event, the writer has much to accomplish in a relatively short time. Beyond making the opening captivating, the writer must select the vital details the audience must have to understand the story. A common error is to cram too much of a character's backstory into the opening. Backstory, by definition is stuff that happens before the story. Don't put it in the setup. Hint at it, intrigue the reader by raising questions and later weave in interesting bits and pieces throughout the story.

Who would you rather sit next to on an airplane, a man who tells you every blasted minute detail of his life or a guy who presents a mystery, a paradox and an intriguing puzzle? I chose the mystery man. Readers want characters who outwardly appear to be one thing, but inside are another.

Another objective of the setup is to show the protagonist's personality, his loves and hates, his relationships (if they are important to the story) and the world your character inhabits. The writer needs to do all that, while presenting the protagonist in situation that causes the audience to identify with them.

How do you do that? Hague lists five tried and true ways to get audiences to identify with your protagonist. Make your protagonists sympathetic, threatened, likable, funny and/or powerful. McKee points out that by making the protagonist likable, or at least more likable than the characters surrounding him, you are creating a character like the audience. In effect, the writer creates the conditions that allow the audience to root for themselves.

One of the most obvious reasons to begin with the protagonist's life prior to the Inciting Incident is so that when this story event occurs, the audience feels they know the protagonist, her world and already identifies completely with her.

The Inciting Incident is the first major event of your story. It is the call to adventure, the catalyst that forces the protagonist into action, the occurrence that shakes the protagonist out of their ordinary world and into the story. Michael Hague calls this story event The Opportunity because it 'creates a new, visible desire' in the protagonist and begins the journey. This event may happen to others as well but it resonates with the protagonist in such a way that he or she must act. For example, many other characters in the movie Jaws know about the shark attack, but the mayor and coroner do not

act. It is only the chief of police, Brody, who develops a visible desire based on the inciting incident. The visible desire created by the inciting incident brings the protagonist to action. This is a change from their ordinary world and launches the protagonist in a new direction.

Let's turn to some examples in the movies. Note the setup, method of building identification, inciting incident and visible desire raised by the incident.

PRETTY WOMAN: (Romantic Comedy)

Setup – This story begins with the protagonist, Vivian, discovering her roommate has stolen the rent money for drugs and the landlord is at the door. She needs rent money quick. We feel for this woman who is placed in such an unfair position through no fault of her own. The audience then immediately switches to the Edward who is leaving a party, thrown in his honor by his closest friend, celebrating a deal he closed. This establishes his success, his power, his wealth and hints that something important is missing from his life.

Method of Building Identification – Edward is rich and powerful. Vivian suffers undeserved misfortune (sympathetic and threatened) and she is funny.

Inciting Incident – Edward gets lost and stops to ask a prostitute for directions.

Visible Desire – Get Edward interested in more than directions and earn the rent money.

LIFE IS BEAUTIFUL: (Drama)

Setup – This movie has a much longer than usual Setup build up so that when the Nazi's march in and take the protagonist to the concentration camp the audience is thoroughly in love with him and his family and feel completely for them. This makes their struggle much more heart-rending. If the writers had begun with the deportation, we would not have felt the horror of this situation so acutely. The sometimes writers spent a long time in the Setup to build empathy toward the protagonist's plight.

Method of Building Identification – protagonist is likable, funny and threatened.
Inciting Incident - Deportation by Nazi forces.

Visible Desire – Survival of self and family.

JAWS (Thriller)

Inciting Incident (Part 1) The movie Jaws opens with the first half of an inciting incident, rather than using a traditional set up. Some inciting incidents are broken into two. This is very common in mysteries and thrillers. Part one is the murder and part two is the discovery of the body. Jaws is an example of this type of opening. The first scene is a young girl being viciously attacked and killed by a shark. This is juxtaposed against the character's ordinary world for contrast and to have a gripping opening. When the ordinary world does appear, the audience enjoys the anticipation of knowing what Brody does not. Oh, sure everything seems normal, but just wait until they find that body.

Setup – The next scene is the ordinary world of the protagonist. The contrast between the attack and the normalcy hints at the distance this protagonist will have to go to fight this opponent. The scene shows the protagonist, introducing his family and his job, as chief of police on an island tourist town. Nearly immediately, he receives a phone call about a missing person (we know where she is) that launches the hero toward the second part of the Inciting Incident.

Method of Building Identification – Brody is likable (family man), empathetic (overworked chief trying to make a good impression in his new job) and threatened (because we know about the shark, though he does not).

Inciting Incident (Part 2)– The chief is interviewing a young man about the missing persons report when a whistle blast (inciting incident, part 2) announces the

discovery of the body on the beach. This discovery points the protagonist toward learning what the audience already knows. There is one hell of a big, hungry shark circling his island. By the time he discovers the body, we already like the protagonist who is a conscientious fish out of water (Bronx boy in New England and non-swimmer). The writers have cleverly build empathy and stacked the deck in favor of the shark.

Visible Desire – Kill the shark

MY COUSIN VINNY

Setup – This screenplay does not open with the hero's ordinary world but by setting up two secondary characters. We see two boys from New York City driving through the Deep South. This might seem the wrong move, since these are not the characters with which the writers want the viewer to bond. True, these events do not happen to the protagonist (Vinny), but they are the events that launch the hero in a new direction.

Method of Building Identification – The boys are likable, very funny, smart (college students), sympathetic (fish out of water) and threatened (wrongly accused of murder). We can imagine the horror of being arrested and tried in a kangaroo court for a crime we didn't commit. The screenwriters have earned our sympathy.

Inciting Incident –Vinny's cousins are wrongly arrested for murder after accidentally stealing a can of tuna fish.

Visible Desire – Help his cousin by proving the boys' innocence.

ROMANCING THE STONE

Setup – This tale opens with Joan Wilder weeping at her keyboard as she completes a gripping romance manuscript and celebrates alone with her cat showing us that she has no one with which to celebrate this milestone. She is presented as a romantic, absentminded, introverted homebody, with a frig full of medications.

The screenwriters also do a nice job foreshadowing the upcoming incident by telling us that her sister is in Columbia and that her sister's husband has just been murdered. A mysterious envelope arrives at Joan's door and a suspicious stranger kills the building super before ransacking her place.

Method of Building Identification – Jane is likable (hopeless romantic), sympathetic (afraid to fly) and is being threatened (by the menacing stranger who is after the envelope).

Inciting Incident –Joan gets a desperate call from her sister telling her she's been kidnapped and will be returned only if Joan brings the treasure map inside the envelope to Columbia (not the river).

Visible Desire – Rescue her sister.

Though many stories begin in the setup, they stay there only as long as it necessary to set up the story and orient the audience. Not all stories begin with the setup, opting to leap in at the inciting incident for a big splash. The drawback of this technique is that the audience cannot appreciate the magnitude of the change wrought by the Inciting Incident because they don't know what is normal and do not know the protagonist. The Inciting Incident needs to be brought on as soon as possible. When there is a great need to build sympathy for the protagonist (*Life is Beautiful*) or to introduce a complicated plot the setup may be longer. An example of a complicated plot with multiple characters is *Pirates of the Caribbean, Search for the Black Pearl*. This story opens with one of the protagonists seeing the Pearl and acquiring a very important Aztec gold coin. The scene then flashes to her as an adult, rediscovering the coin and putting it around her neck. We then meet another protagonist delivering a sword and discover that he is the boy who escaped the pirate ship and the rightful owner of the coin. Next, we meet another protagonist, Jack Sparrow, a pirate captain in search of a new vessel. The next scene returns to the female protagonist who faints and

falls into the sea before Jack's eyes. The Inciting Incident is the coin touching the ocean. It causes a shock wave that changes the winds and precipitating her rescue by the captain. It also summons the Black Pearl and her supernatural crew, effectively launching the story.

If the situation is universally understood (ex. A girl being eaten by a shark, a murder, an abduction/kidnapping). The introduction of characters in their ordinary world is often sandwiched between the two parts of the Inciting Incident or follows it.

The Inciting Incident is the story event that forever changes the course of the protagonist's life. It is not a cute meet that has no bearing on the rest of the tale. It can happen by chance (discovery of a body, JAWS, envelope at the door, ROMANCING THE SONE, wrongful arrest, MY COUSIN VINNY) or by choice (pulling your fancy sports car to the curb in a shady neighborhood to ask a hooker for directions, PRETTY WOMAN).

A great opening will hints at the story question and sets up the inevitable crisis. It does not occur off screen or before the story begins, but is a fully developed dramatic event that causes the protagonist to act in an effort to restore the balance upset by the Inciting Incident, while raising curiosity in the audience as to how this will work out. This event is the catalyst that causes our protagonist to want something, or want to avoid something, badly enough to act to achieve this new goal. This action leads us to the subject of the next in this series of three articles...*Progressive Complications*.



About the Author: Jenna Kernan writes fast-paced romantic adventures that will capture your heart. Romantic Times BookClub said her stories made, "Tip-top reading." Her next release, SIERRA BRIDE, arrives in August 2009 and involves the young widow, of a notorious man, who is determined to keep her freedom and a railroad baron set on making her his mistress. When she is implicated in a plot to destroy him, he must decide if he should listen to reason or follow his heart. Jenna keeps her website current with excerpts, articles and monthly contests. Please visit her anytime at www.jennakernan.com.

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The Hero's Journey Recap by Caridad Pineiro

Vogler's Hero's Journey is based on the work of Joseph Campbell and his research into myth in Campbell's Hero of a Thousand Faces. How did Vogler discover this work? Vogler was working for Disney who asked Vogler analyze hit movies. As Vogler spoke to top Hollywood directors like Spielberg and Lucas, Vogler's name kept on coming up. Vogler then distilled Campbell's work into his own summary of the Hero's Journey.

The premise of Campbell's work is that no matter what culture you are from, there are certain parts of a story that appeal to you on a gut level, namely, the Hero's Journey. If you use the steps in the Hero's Journey in your work, you will elicit those gut reactions in your reader and they will connect with your story because of this. Remember that these steps do not necessarily need to be followed in the order as indicated. You can move the steps around to suit your story. For example, in a suspense or mystery, you might begin with one of the supreme ordeals, showing the black moment before jumping back in time to show the story which leads up to the supreme ordeal.

I wish to stress that this is just a plotting aid and not the only way that you can create a compelling plot. This aid may work for you or it may not. The important thing that you have to do as a storyteller is write a story that engages the reader and for me, the Hero's Journey let me do just that.

As mentioned on the website and in the earlier newsletter, I recommended that you watch Officer and Gentleman as I would be discussing the various steps in the Hero's Journey using examples from this motion picture. We will also be having a movie day later this year where we will view the movie as a group and stop and discuss the various steps as they occur during the motion picture. Following are the steps in the Hero's Journey along with my comments regarding where these steps occur in Officer and a Gentleman. My comments are in italics after the explanation of each

step.

1. Ordinary World:

Show the hero in her customary element

This sets the tone and suggests the dramatic question of the story

Make the Ordinary World as different as possible from the Special World

State the theme of your story

We see Zach and his father sharing an unusual birthday present – two whores after a night of boozing. Zach advises his father that he is off to Officer Candidate's School to become a pilot.

2. Call to Adventure:

Establishes the stakes of the game

Makes the hero's goal clear

Hero is presented with a challenge or adventure to undertake and cannot remain in her Ordinary World

*Zach's father challenges Zach, advising his son that he doesn't have what it takes to be an officer and that the only reason he wishes to do this is to show up his old man. Some people choose to show people doing "ordinary" things in this step, but the thing to remember is that the aspects you show in the hero's **regular** world need to be those that have some connection to the plot or show us something about the hero. Do not show us ordinary things, such as picking up dry cleaning, that have nothing to do with the basic premise of the story.*

3. Refusal of the Call (the Reluctant Hero):

Hero has not committed to the journey

Make require the assistance of a Mentor

The Mentor is one of the most important themes in mythology. It stands for the bond between parent and child, teacher and student, god and man.

Meeting with the Mentor provides the hero knowledge, confidence, etc. to undertake the Journey

Zach goes to the base and sits outside the base on his motorcycle, clearly considering his father's words. He has a tattoo and he realizes that in Navy lore that is not acceptable for officers.

4. Crossing the First Threshold:

Hero agrees to face the challenge of problem posed in the Call to Adventure

Crossing into the Special World is an act of will

Often illustrated by showing the hero crossing a physical barriers, i.e. door, bridge.

This is the turning point in which the adventure actually begins

Zach covers the tattoo up and proceeds onto the base to begin his training to become an officer. Zach also meets his mentor at this point – the drill sergeant played by Lou Gossett as well as his roommates and the character played by David Keith.

5. Tests, Allies and Enemies:

Hero is presented with challenges and tests

Makes allies and enemies

These tests show us the hero's character as she and her companions respond to the tests

Tests prepare the Hero for greater ordeals ahead

This is our first view of the Special World which should strike a sharp contrast to the Ordinary World the hero has just left

"Getting to know you" scenes common at this point

There are a series of scenes during which we learn more about Zach. Some are in flashback and show us the trauma he suffered with his mother's suicide and his move to the Philippines. We also see scenes where Zach is breaking the honor code and refuses to assist a roommate, attempts to avoid a fight at a local bar and meets his prospective girlfriend. Each of the scenes provides information about Zach that we need in order to get to know him. Remember that each scene in your story needs to either advance the plot or provide information that we need to know about the character.

6. Approach to the Inmost Cave:

Hero confronts and prepares for achieving her goal

May suffer setbacks or reversals of fortune

We see Zach preparing to be an officer and struggling with certain tasks, such as his studies. We see Zach excelling at the obstacle course and Dover Dunker, yet we see Zach is still alone and has

not made many connections to the other OCS candidates.

7. The Supreme Ordeal:

Fortunes of the hero hit rock bottom

This is a critical moment and is the major source of the heroic myth

Will the hero live or die, or appear to die so that they may be born again

This is the crisis. The central event of the story.

Hero faces her greatest fear

Zach is caught with the contraband goods that he was selling to other OCS candidates. The drill sergeant wants Zach to drop out of the program, but Zach refuses to drop out. The drill sergeant keeps Zach on the base over the weekend and subjects him to a series of tests in the hopes of getting Zach to drop out. Zach refuses to do so and in a climactic scene, confesses to the drill sergeant that he has nowhere else to go. That he has nothing else, thereby confessing his greatest fear and agony. The drill sergeant relents and tells Zach he may stay and in a light-hearted moment, a boat drives by in the water below them and the drill sergeant is mooned by the occupants, letting Zach know that he might not necessarily be alone anymore.

8. Reward (Seizing the Sword):

Having survived, the hero celebrates

Hero takes possession of the Reward

Sometimes the Reward is Knowledge

Often a place in the story where the hero and his allies recall what has happened and how they have reached this place

These quiet moments allow us to get to know the characters better

Zach makes love to his girlfriend, shares time with his friends and begins to befriend the others in the OCS program.

9. The Road Back:

Decision to return to the Ordinary World

Special World is left behind as the hero returns to a starting point or continues on her Journey

This can be another moment of crisis or a reversal of the Hero's good fortune

The change in the hero's character must be shown at this stage

Zach hangs out with his friends. He helps a female OCS candidate to finish the obstacle program, forfeiting his own wish to set a course record in order to help a friend. But there is a reversal here as well since having survived the worst of the OCS training, he sets aside his girlfriend to hang out with his new friends.

10. Resurrection

A second life-and-death moment (a la Supreme Ordeal)

Death and darkness get in one last shot before finally being defeated

Opportunity to show how the hero has absorbed lessons from the Mentor, Allies and Enemies

The stakes are at their highest here and you must show the awareness the hero has reached on his journey

The change should not be abrupt, but should have been gradually becoming obvious to the reader

The David Keith character's girlfriend advises him that she is pregnant. He believes that the best thing to do is to drop out of the program and when Zach goes to counsel him, he confesses that he was in the program for all the wrong reasons – for his parents and his brother who was killed in Vietnam. (Consider that this secondary character also has a similar journey that is ongoing during the story.) David Keith drops out of the program and his girlfriend rejects him, telling him she wanted to be the wife of an officer and that she is not pregnant. Distraught, David Keith runs off. Zach, fearing for his friend, goes after him and finds his girlfriend who tells him about what happened. Even more concerned, Zach and his girlfriend search for David Keith but find him dead and hanging from a bathroom shower. He has left no note and this mirrors Zach's past – a mother who committed suicide and left no note. Zach withdraws into himself, backing away from his girlfriend, and goes to challenge the drill sergeant about his actions in allowing his friend to drop out of the program. A fight ensues and Zach loses, but his friends cheer for him as he fights.

11. Return with the Elixir

Hero returns to the Ordinary World

Hero brings with her some Elixir -- the lesson or treasure from the Special World That elixir can be some treasure or love, freedom, wisdom, knowledge or sometimes, just coming home with a good story to tell.

Zach finishes the training and we see a graduation ceremony. He is congratulated by all of his friends and saluted by the drill sergeant since he is now an officer. He acknowledges that he has learned a great deal, but there is one thing that is missing – love. Zach goes off to find his girlfriend and finds her working the paper bag factory. He goes up to her, puts his hat on her head and sweeps her up into his arms. Exit to the tune of “Love lift us up where we belong . . .”

If you haven't watched the movie, take a moment to do so with the above steps in mind. Also, use the worksheet provided during the workshop (which has also been uploaded to the website) and see if any of the parts of your story match one or more of the steps in the Hero's Journey.

I hope you will find this plotting aid as helpful as I have. Good luck with your writing! The podcast and workshop materials are available in the Members Only section.



About the Author: Caridad Pineiro is a NY Times and USA TODAY bestselling author of over 20 novels. Caridad's latest releases are HONOR CALLS, a Nocturne Bite novella and FURY CALLS, from Silhouette Nocturne. In November, Caridad will have her first single title paranormal romantic release, SINS OF THE FLESH, from Grand Central Publishing. For more info on Caridad, please visit www.caridad.com or www.thecallingvampirenovels.com. Return to top of Newsletter. . .

Media Interviewing Tips for Writers by Whitney McKnight

Let's just say it's bound to happen. Your work has attracted the attention of the media and now you're in demand as a guest. Nice job! Now, here're some tips to help you understand what you're in for, and how to make a good impression.

Why Am I Here?

Don't ever, not even for a second, forget the cardinal rule of being interviewed: media is a business. That you've been asked for an interview means that you are seen as having something to offer that will help sell programming or other content. Put another way, it's really not about you. It's about selling the program. Thinking about the role you play in this transaction helps *you* sell your own point of view.

Have you written something controversial? Innovative? Does your subject matter dovetail with current events? Are you an expert on something, and is this reflected in your writing? Once you've identified what makes you stand out, are you the only guest or source in the segment or story? If so, then determine what the interviewer will want to know on behalf of his or her audience. Doing this isn't hard. You can begin by asking the show booker or producer what they're looking for, or asking the reporter or blogger to either give you a list of questions in advance, or at least a general idea of what they're interested in.

Tread carefully when asking for questions, especially from print reporters: some don't mind, some do, preferring to capture the energy of your spontaneous answers. But in general, media professionals would rather you sound informed instead of like a dope, and so will at least tell you what the point of the story or segment is. (Read on for more about providing your own questions to the interviewer.)

Once you've got a good idea of what subject matter you'll be expected to cover, will you be

expected to provide counterbalance to the views of another guest? If so, research that person and his or her work, too. And if you're on a panel, then by all means, find out who else will be on the panel, as well as who the moderator is, and research them so you know where you fit in!

What's the format?

Different media formats have, shall we say, different vibes. For example, being interviewed on the set of a live television show is entirely different from being on a radio talk show. And both are quite different from an email exchange between a journo and yourself.

Panels have a rhythm all their own, depending on the purpose, venue, and number of panelists, but the primary thing to keep in mind is that you will be "on display" much longer than the time you are allotted to speak. So, even if you're bored to tears (let's hope that's not true), be polite and look interested, without drawing attention to yourself unless it's your turn to speak.

Television shows taped in front of a studio audience might look like guests are having a real conversation, but it's actually a performance. Imagine this: you're at a cocktail party talking with another person. But, instead of the other guests milling around, each one of them is watching you and listening to every word you and your acquaintance say.

On radio and most other TV show formats, you know conceptually there is an audience, but it's easier to focus on the interviewer's questions and have a "normal" conversation because you can't see anyone else (accept the occasional production crew member).

And with print and on-line (accepting live chats), maybe it really is just you and the reporter or blogger talking over the phone or in person, which can feel quite natural.

BUT!! Don't let any of these fool you into thinking that you're just having a little chat. Remember the cardinal rule: this is business. You're not being interviewed to be pals, but to offer information. To do that, you need to stay focused. (In PR parlance, that's called "staying on message".)

Practice Staying "on Message"

Now that you've thought about the reason for being interviewed, what role you play, the format, and are keeping in mind that this is a business transaction, ask yourself, What will the audience most benefit from hearing or reading me say? With that information in mind, jot down a main theme and some supporting points—try to keep it at only three.

For example, maybe you've been contacted to discuss a series of romantic suspense novels you've written, featuring a single mother who became a detective to make ends meet. Maybe your heroine goes undercover in some unseemly places in order to solve crimes. Let's say your scenes are based on your own experiences and/or research and that's what the interviewer wants to talk with you about. Three supporting points might be: the risks and fears involved for this character and how you and other women might relate to them; which other heroines, both real and fictional are similar to yours (this puts you and your work in context); and what your character has learned about herself as a result. Bam. There's an entire interview's worth of discussion.

Now practice talking about these points, over and over, perhaps in a mirror or in front of others. Even better, record yourself until you feel comfortable with the sound of your own voice, and with your grasp of the information. What you're going for is the ability to sound spontaneous without rambling.

Here's an important tip: ask the interviewer would like the same list of questions.

There are at least two reasons for this: either they're too busy or they just aren't interested, but

often the person interviewing you will not have read your book. All they know is that you're an expert or are somehow interesting to their audience. They'll appreciate your help. On the other hand, the interviewer might have read your work, and, in addition to his or her own questions, is happy to let you discuss what you want. Take advantage of that—but of course, what's the cardinal rule? Right. So make sure you keep the audience in mind and don't be boring!

Another point to keep in mind along the lines of this being a business transaction is to not be too quick to show your hand. In other words, truly listen to what you're being asked, and be sure you understand the intention behind it. This will allow you to avoid the interview from going in a direction you didn't intend, and to give a thorough answer that will satisfy your audience.

If you're to be interviewed for print, consider asking if the interview can be entirely through email. This is common practice anymore, and allows both the you and the interviewer the opportunity to reflect on what's being 'said' before hitting the send key.

Don't Be a Pain

Don't keep saying, "As you'll read in my book," etc. While an interview is not a real conversation, neither is it an infomercial. The interviewer should be skilled enough to promote you and your book without you having to do it for them. On the rare occasion when the interviewer forgets, politely ask if he or she minds if you mention how the audience can contact you and find copies of your work.

Other tips that make you a dream guest include, if you're on TV, not looking sloppy or "busy". Don't wear rumpled clothes, keep your wardrobe toned down, avoid tiny patterns like checks, and skip the monochromatic color schemes, especially white because of the weird glowing effect it has. Shades of basic blue read on camera the best. If in doubt, arrive early and bring a change of clothes just in case the producer thinks what you're wearing might not "read" well on camera.

On radio and TV, avoid jingly jangly jewelry, as the microphones are sensitive and will pick up any of the gypsy sounds you might inadvertently make. Also for both radio and TV, speak clearly and try to avoid popping your p's and b's by speaking into the mic, but at a slight angle. If you have to cough, producers will usually mute your mic if necessary, but try to turn away from the mic anyway.

And finally...

Enjoy the fact that you've got something interesting to say and make the most of your good fortune to have attracted attention!

About the Author: Whitney McKnight is a writer, editor, and media consultant in Marlton, NJ www.whitneymcknight.com. For more on Whitney, please also check out this month's member spotlight [by clicking here](#).

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